



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 237

February Session, 2016

House Bill No. 5383

House of Representatives, March 29, 2016

The Committee on Environment reported through REP. ALBIS of the 99th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARM VIABILITY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM AND THE CONNECTICUT FARM LINK PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 22-26j of the general statutes is repealed and the
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

3 The Department of Agriculture shall establish and administer a
4 farm viability matching grant program to any agricultural not-for-
5 profit organization, municipality, group of municipalities, regional
6 council of governments organized under the provisions of sections 4-
7 124i to 4-124p, inclusive, or group of municipalities that have
8 established a regional interlocal agreement pursuant to sections 7-339a
9 to 7-339l, inclusive, to further agricultural viability. Such grants may be
10 used for the following purposes: (1) Local capital projects that foster
11 agricultural viability, including, but not limited to, processing facilities
12 and farmers' markets; (2) the development and implementation of
13 agriculturally-friendly land use regulations and local farmland
14 protection strategies that sustain and promote local agriculture; [and]

15 (3) the development of new marketing programs and venues through
16 or in which a majority of products sold are grown in the state; and (4)
17 the development and implementation of programs and services that
18 promote farm and farmland access and transfer of such farms.

19 Sec. 2. Section 22-26l of the 2016 supplement to the general statutes
20 is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
21 *from passage*):

22 (a) The Department of Agriculture shall establish and administer a
23 Connecticut Farm Link program to establish a database of farmers and
24 agricultural land owners who intend to sell, lease or otherwise transfer
25 their farm operations or agricultural land. The database shall be
26 maintained by the Department of Agriculture and shall be made
27 available to the public on the department's web site. Persons interested
28 in starting an agricultural business or persons interested in expanding
29 a current agricultural business may notify the department and have
30 their names, contact information and intentions regarding such
31 businesses [placed on the web site] entered in such database. The
32 department shall make reasonable efforts to facilitate contact between
33 parties with [similar] compatible interests, including, but not limited
34 to, growing and processing crops as feedstock for biodiesel heating
35 and transportation fuels. The Department of Agriculture may
36 collaborate with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, The University of
37 Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service and the Labor Department
38 to encourage and assist veterans in starting or expanding an
39 agricultural business and to provide education and training
40 opportunities to veterans concerning farming or agricultural
41 operations.

42 (b) The Department of Agriculture shall post [educational] materials
43 regarding the Connecticut Farm Link program [on the department's
44 web site] and farmland access, restoration and transfer on the
45 department's Internet web site, conduct outreach to landowners and
46 farmers, perform on-site investigations for lands enrolled in the Farm
47 Link program, facilitate contact between parties with compatible

48 interests and provide related educational programming, including, but
49 not limited to, [information] programs regarding farm transfer and
50 farm succession planning, family farm estate planning, farm transfer
51 strategies, farm leasing, formation of farm partnerships, growing and
52 processing crops as feedstock for biodiesel heating and transportation
53 fuels and information regarding starting a farm business.

54 (c) The department may create partnerships or utilize third-party
55 entities to implement the provisions of this section.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	22-26j
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	22-26l

ENV *Joint Favorable*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 17 \$	FY 18 \$
Department of Agriculture	GF; Non-Appropriated accounts – Potential Cost	See Below	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) to expand the Farm Link and farm viability matching grant programs for certain purposes.

There is a cost to DoAg associated with expanding the Farm Link and farm viability grant programs, which would vary based on the number of applicants eligible under the bill's provisions. However, as the funding source for these grants is capped, this additional cost would only be incurred to the extent that sufficient funding was provided.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact in the outyears depends on expenditures made from the Farm Link and farm viability matching grant accounts.

OLR Bill Analysis**HB 5383*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE FARM VIABILITY MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM AND THE CONNECTICUT FARM LINK PROGRAM.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture (DoAg) to expand the Farm Link program, which links farmers and agricultural land owners who want to sell their farm or land with people who want to start or expand an agricultural business. The bill expands the program to farmers and land owners who want to lease or transfer their farm or land to others.

By law, DoAg must maintain a database of program participants and post information about the program on its website; provide educational programming, such as farm transfer and succession planning; and make reasonable efforts to facilitate contact between parties. The bill requires DoAg to also post information on its website about farmland access, restoration, and transfer; conduct outreach to farmers and land owners; and perform on-site investigations of land enrolled in the program. The bill authorizes DoAg to create partnerships or use third-parties to implement the Farm Link program.

In addition, the bill expands the purposes for which grants under DoAg's farm viability matching grant program may be used. By law, farm viability grants are available to nonprofit agricultural organizations, municipalities, groups of municipalities, and regional councils of government. The bill allows the grants to be used to develop and implement programs and services promoting farm and farmland access and farm transfers. Under existing law, grants may be used to (1) fund capital projects fostering agricultural viability (e.g., farmers' markets and processing facilities); (2) develop and implement land use regulations and farmland protection strategies that sustain

and promote local agriculture; and (3) develop new marketing programs and venues for products grown in the state.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 29 Nay 0 (03/11/2016)